

GERMANY'S STRUGGLE A WAR ON PRINCIPLE OF POLITICAL LIBERTY

J. B. Bury, Famous English Scholar, Denies
European Outbreak Is Clash Between
"Kultur" and Slavism.

TEUTONS FAVORED RUSS TYRANNY

Declares Kaiser's Policy Suppression of Poles and
Austrian Slavs and Control of Balkan
Peninsula and Black Sea.

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The war in which Europe is now engaged has been represented by some prominent spokesmen of Germany as a conflict between Teutonic and Slavonic civilization. Slavonic civilization is described as the "Muscovite barbarism" of "Asiatic" Russia, and the inference is drawn that Great Britain and France, in co-operating with Russia, are betraying the cause of enlightenment and progress for which Germany is contending.

The object of these stages is to show, in the first place, that even if the description of Russian civilization as barbarous were justified, Germany is the last country in the world whose relations with Russia give her the right to denounce others for co-operating with Russia, and, in the second place, that certain specific features of German civilization in the political sphere are, in principle, as fundamentally opposed to ideas for which Frenchmen and Britons, Americans and Italians would be ready to lay down their lives, as are the specific features of Russian autocracy, which will appear incidentally that the actual issues between Teuton and Slav are perfectly definite political interests.

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Prussia Cuts Into Poland.

It is obvious that for the consolidation of the Prussian state no territorial acquisition was more desirable than the Polish lands which separated Prussia from Pomerania and Silesia. Frederick made the proposal to Catherine that they should increase their territories at Poland's expense; Austria came in as a third party, and in 1772 the first dismemberment of Poland gave Prussia the necessary territorial continuity between her sunnier possessions. The example of Frederick was followed by his successors. Two subsequent partitions with Russia (1793, with Russia and Austria, 1795) obliterated Poland from the map and extended the borders of Prussia east to the Baltic.

It would not be over the mark to call these proceedings high handed; much stronger terms have generally been used. So far as the first dismemberment is concerned, Frederick might plead that if Prussia, to use the modern phrase, was to have her place in the sun, the possession of Northern Poland was a political necessity, and that the rights of the Poles would not be allowed to stand in the way. The later spoliation can hardly be covered by the same plea. But whatever may be thought of the transactions, this co-operation by which Prussia secured for a part of unwilling Poland the blessings of German rule and delivered another part to the mercies of "Muscovite barbarism" was destined to form the basis of further co-operation and intimacy between the governments of St. Petersburg and Berlin.

The Treaty of Vienna.

By the Treaty of Vienna (1815) Prussia recovered only part of the Polish spoils which Napoleon had compelled her to relinquish. They were the most important—West Prussia and Posen. The revival of an independent Polish kingdom, under French auspices, was a dream of brief duration, had reinvigorated the patriotic hopes of the Poles, and for a long time to come the extinction of these national aspirations was to be one of the most serious tasks confronting the rulers of Prussia and Russia.

Up to the present time it has been a leading problem of Prussian domestic policy to strengthen the Polish provinces by strengthening the German population there and impressing German ideas on the Poles. "It is the problem," says the ex-Chancellor, Prince von Bismarck, "of the development of which the immediate future of our country depends." And it is a problem which was one of the governing motives of Prussia in her relations with Russia throughout the nineteenth century.

The note was struck in 1830. Till then Prussia tried the experiment of a liberal policy toward her Polish subjects. There was a Provincial Diet in Posen, of which the members were elected by the people, and there was a Polish Governor, as well as a Prussian President. This policy, however, did not conciliate the Poles to Prussian rule, and when Russian Poland rebelled, in 1830, the rebels found support among their compatriots beyond the Prussian border. The solidarity of the interests of the two powers against a Polish movement of independence was thus demonstrated.

Austrian interests were similarly affected, and an agreement was concluded, at Munich, in 1833, between Russia, Prussia and Austria to combine

in suppressing agitation in their Polish provinces, to surrender refugees and to give mutual aid in case of revolts. Prussia abandoned her liberal experiment, the Polish Governor was abolished, Prussian officials were appointed, and the policy was inaugurated of settling German landowners in the provinces in order to strengthen the German element.

Nicholas I Opposes Liberalism.

The convention of Munchengrätz had a larger significance in the eyes of the Czar Nicholas I, who brought it about, than in the eyes of the Prussian statesmen. The spirit of autocracy, believed it to be his duty to resist to the utmost the propagation of the liberal ideas of Western Europe, and in Russia and Austria he saw at once two barriers to protect Russia against the pernicious doctrines current in France, Belgium and Italy and two supports for the monarchical principle. In fact, he designed a political system, which we might describe as a league of monarchism, to oppose encroachments of western constitutionalism.

The intimacy between Russia and Prussia was facilitated by the relationship of the rulers. The Czar was son-in-law of Frederick William III. At the crisis of the Crimean War there was danger of a rupture. A party at the Prussian court, known as the Wocherblatt party from the name of their press organ, advocated efforts to bring about a partition of Russia and to cultivate a friendship with England which would lead to the united Germany. This party was supported by the Princess Augusta, wife of the heir to the throne. She was partly of Russian descent, as her mother was daughter of the Emperor Paul, but she detested Russia. This aversion constantly caused difficulties to Bismarck, who speaks satirically of her idea that good will toward England and even toward France, was a sign of higher culture than goodwill toward Russia. Prince William was nearly won over by his wife and the Wocherblatt party, but policy opposed to Russia, but Bismarck dissuaded him, urging especially that such a policy would formidably increase the difficulty of the Polish problem.

Bismarck Gets Whip Hand.

The lesson of 1830 had not been lost in Prussia, and when trouble arose in Russia Poland in 1862-63, Bismarck took the needed measures. There was a division in the governing circle at St. Petersburg, between the liberal and the Polish sympathies. The Grand Duke Constantine was a man of liberal opinions, and when he was appointed viceroy of Poland he at the crisis he spoke Polish, wore a Polish uniform and assumed the most conciliatory attitude. Alexander II was half inclined to a philo-Polish policy, and out for the acquisition of the extreme revolutionary party in Poland this might in the end have prevailed. Bismarck's diplomacy was directed toward insuring the victory of the old absolutist principle. The question of rights was, however, whether the Russian Cabinet was dominated "by an effort after Russo-Polish fraternization in the anti-German Pan-Slavist interest or by one for mutual relief between Russia and Prussia."

He had against him not only the Russian philo-Polish party, but also the influence of France, England and Austria, which made repeated representations to the Czar at St. Petersburg (1865) urging liberal concessions, such as representative government, appointment of Poles to public offices and the exclusive use of Polish as the official language. Bismarck was successful. A military convention was concluded, and Prussia helped Russia to crush the revolt by guarding the frontier, so that the insurgents could not escape. In the convention Bismarck said, political, not merely military, significance. "It stood for the victory in the Russian Cabinet of Prussia over Polish policy."

An agreement between Russia and the German for of Pan-Slavism, the joint action military and political, against the Polish "Bruder-tamm" movement was a decisive blow to the views of the philo-Polish party at the Russian court.

To these quotations, which illuminate the consistent policy of Prussia, I may add one more: "For the German future of Prussia the attitude of Russia was a question of great importance. A philo-Polish Russian policy was calculated to vivify that Russo-French sympathy against which Prussia's effort had been directed since the peace of Paris, and, indeed, on occasion earlier."

Austria Takes Part of Poles.

It is to be noted that Austria on this occasion associated herself with the Western powers in behalf of the Poles. She could afford to do this because she had herself been comparatively liberal in her treatment of the Poles of Galicia. Her empire consisted of many nationalities, its complete Germanization could never be her object; whereas complete Germanization was the definite policy of Prussia, a policy to be pursued not only in the Polish districts, but also afterward in Schleswig and Elsass. Austria, moreover, stood in a different position in regard to Russia on account of the opposite interest in the Balkan Peninsula, and the favor she showed toward her Poles was at least partly influenced by the consideration that she might use them as a weapon against Russia.

Russia was somewhat alarmed at the advances of the Prussian power in 1864, but Bismarck, who boasted that he had the ear of the Czar, avoided a rupture of the friendly relations between the governments, and in 1870 Russian in-

fluence counted for much in determining Austria not to assist France. After the Treaty of Frankfurt Bismarck contemplated a triple alliance between the three empires, with the idea of bringing in afterward "monarchical Italy."

It was following in the steps of the Czar Nicholas. His project was a new league of monarchism. The alliance was not concluded, but an entente was formed between the three empires in 1873, and Germany for some ten years the leading factor in international politics. It was menaced for a moment by the crisis between France and Germany in 1870, and more seriously by the situation in Italy. But Austria and Russia seemed imminent. Bismarck told Schwellenbach, the Prussian Ambassador at St. Petersburg, that "our first care was to preserve the friendship between the monarchies which in a struggle with one another had more to lose as regarded their opposition to the revolution than they had to win," and instructed him to make it clear to the Czar's government that Germany would not suffer Austria to lose her position as an independent power. The result was that the Russian storm was diverted from the Carpathians to the Balkans.

Bismarck Favors Russo-German Pact.

A letter of Bismarck to Count Poretsky, February 1877, resumes his general view of German political relations with Russia. "Whatever the political future of our two countries may be, the part I have played in the past allows me satisfaction in the present, respecting the necessity of their alliance. I have always been in agreement with the statesmen most worthy of esteem among your compatriots. As long as an amicable relation exists between the two nations, which I have been guided for five and twenty years, and of which the principles coincide with the ideas expressed in your letter in regard to the reciprocal services which Russia and Germany can render to one another and have rendered for more than a century without harming the particular interests of either. It was that conviction which guided me in 1848, in 1864, in 1866, in 1870, and in 1871, and for which I succeeded in gaining the suffrages of the majority of my countrymen."

None of the powers principally interested in the result of the Congress of Berlin (1878), and Russia blamed Bismarck for not having adequately supported her. There was a consequent coolness, and in the following year Germany concluded a defensive alliance with Austria, which in 1882, was expanded into the Triple Alliance. In pursuing this policy Bismarck thought that Austria and Germany might strive for a further consolidation, or, rather, for a renewal, of the understanding between the three emperors. "I regarded it as no less enjoined upon us to cultivate neighborly relations with Russia after, than before, our defensive alliance with Austria," he said. "I believe that the three emperors were renewed by the agreement of Skierskewitz (September, 1887), and in 1889, by the 'Reinsurance Treaty' concluded from the other members of the Triple Alliance. Many guarantees to Russia support against an attack by Austria for five years."

"Reinsurance Treaty" Unrenewed.

Bismarck's successor did not renew this treaty, and the Dual Alliance between Russia was concluded in 1890. Germany still, so far as the changed circumstances permitted, aimed at friendly relations with her eastern neighbor and showed good will toward her at the time of the Russo-Japanese war. After that war there was a slight coolness in Franco-Russian relations, whereas there was an increase of warmth in those between Russia and Germany. "But the situation had changed profoundly. The foundation of German policy on intimacy with Austria would naturally lead to sympathy with Austria, and in the Balkans, yet Bismarck could still say, 'I believe that it would be advantageous for Germany if the Russians, in one way or other, physically or diplomatically, were to establish themselves at Constantinople and had to defend that position.' But with the rapid growth in the post-Bismarckian period of German world-policy, which extended to the Turkish Empire in Asia, sympathy was converted into solidarity by the direct German interests in Turkey and the Mediterranean. Germany now sought to establish herself diplomatically at Constantinople, and she succeeded in doing so, when the rest of Europe was shocked at the German annexation of Austria and could now serve German interests. The Austrian aim to control a passage through the Balkan Peninsula and an outlet on the Aegean coincided with the German purpose (Germany's fear of Slavism, which had hitherto only regarded Poland, now extended to the south Slavonic sphere. Thus the development of her world policy completely changed the ground for her future relations with Russia."

Prussia Fears Liberalism.

An unfriendly critic might observe that while the Russian autocracy lasted in an unmitigated form, Prussia was hand in glove with Russia, and that she waited until the government had inaugurated a liberal policy, by the creation of a parliament, to go to war and denounce the power which was her traditional friend as "barbarous" and the connection is probably to be found, partly at least, in Poland.

Since 1872 the most determined and persistent efforts were made, and the severest measures adopted, to Germanize the Prussian Poles. The struggle known as the Kulturkampf (1873-74) between the government and the Catholic Church, the position of the Catholic Poles was an important factor. Extensive purchases of land from

Polish owners were made for the purpose of colonizing the provinces and ultimately serving as majority of German inhabitants. When this method reached its limit the results were satisfactory. In 1900 it was officially reported that since 1890 the German population had diminished by more than 500,000, while the Poles had increased by more than 250,000.

Accordingly a compulsory dispossession bill was passed in 1908. But it admitted that the policy of colonization and the strict enforcement of the German language in the schools have on the whole achieved little. Prince von Bismarck acknowledged that the goal is still distant, though he thinks it can be attained "if we do not tire of this troublesome struggle, enlisting so many sacrifices, and if the story phases of practical politics do not again cause the great and permanent demands of national policy into the background."

Germans Powerful in Russia.

To this sketch of the relations between Germany and Russia a remark must be added on the part which Bismarck took in building up the bureaucratic system which has been the great obstacle to reform in Russia. In the spirit of Europeanizing the Moscow Empire, which began with Peter the Great and progressed steadily throughout the eighteenth century, Germany played a leading role. The most important part of the policy was to organize bureaucracy and to build up the military system, which was founded on German models. As time went on, the state's dependence on foreigners, but still depending on the Russian lands of Estonia, Livonia and Kur-land were, in the early years of Nicholas I, still preponderant in the higher command in the army and in the important state offices. It was Bismarck, who organized the Political Secret Police (third section), perhaps the most unpopular institution introduced by Nicholas.

The spirit of the Western republics, France and the United States; the two great constitutional monarchies, Great Britain and Italy, and most of the smaller states of Europe, as well as the self-governing states of the British Empire, have, in common, responsible government, democratic institutions and a similar ideal of political liberty. From this point of view the Western powers stand in contrast to the autocracy of the Russian Empire, which, in its explanation of his philo-Russian policy, on a different side of the fence from Germany and Austria.

Military Caste Predominant.

We have watched with respectful interest Germany's development on her own lines with monarchism, paternal government, the divine right of kings, the preponderance of a military caste (who seem to believe with Von Moltke that "war is an essential element in God's scheme of the universe") and a form of constitutionalism which we regard as spurious. This system may lead to greater efficiency, and it seems, as Prince von Bismarck has explained, to suit the Germans. They feel free under it.

But Italy and America should not feel free under it. It is not our ideal of political liberty. Paternal government, "paternal favour," is repugnant to us. We will not submit to any authority except an authority appointed and controlled by ourselves. The irresponsibility of the German executive is, in principle, no less opposed to our ideas than Russian autocracy. The Imperial Chancellor is responsible only to the Emperor who appoints him, and the Emperor is responsible only to God.

Among the differences between German civilization and that of the United States, of which ours is a variety, I may note two which affect international questions.

Russia More Liberal Than Prussia.

One of the features which have characterized Western civilization since the dissolution of the Holy Alliance has been the growth of sympathy with the spirit of nationality and a prevailing tendency to recognize the right of small peoples to enjoy political independence. To the triumphs of this principle, throughout the nineteenth century, England and France have contributed, and their help, moral or material, has never been forgotten in Italy, delivered from the Austrians; in Greece, delivered from the Turks; in Rumania, delivered from the Russians; and in many other of the great peoples in the interest of small nationalities. They co-operated with France and England in helping Greece; to them Serbia and the Armenian race owe their independence. Russia has never shown any sympathy with the spirit of nationality, apart from the national union of Germany itself. So Europe's nation has to thank Germany for aiding the fulfillment of its national aspirations. No Pomeranian grenadier was ever sacrificed to help a small people to independence.

It is quite true that even in the councils of the Western powers the principle of nationality has but slowly made way. The difficulties in asserting it have been immense. English policy has been more than once untrue to the cause of oppressed peoples. But since the days of Canning the general trend of British opinion and policy has been unmistakable. The general trend of Prussian policy has been equally unmistakable, and the coincidence of its interests with Austrian interests has tended to confirm it. In the keynote of the power of Austro-Hungary, as of that of Turkey, is the suppression of national aspirations. The immediate cause of the present war was a collision between the two principles, and France and Britain, even if they were not involved in it, would sympathize with Serbia and the rights of independence for which she stands.

I am not criticizing the German attitude of the champion of enlightenment against the spirit of nationality, which has been such a vital force in European history during the last century, whether for good or for evil, is sharply opposed to the persistent tendency of Western opinion, and that in this respect Russia has found it to her interest repeatedly to help to realize the principle of which Western liberal opinion approves. This is one of the practical issues on which the Teutons have collided with the Slavs; and it is a point in which Teutonic sympathies are opposed to those of the Western powers.

At the outbreak of the present war Germany gave the world a practical lesson in political philosophy. The doctrine that treaties need not be observed when they are seriously inconvenient is a logical deduction from the principle that the plea of political or military necessity justifies any action on the part of a strong power. Its application in the invasion of Belgium in 1914 marks the progress of Prussian political thought since the days of Bismarck. We can hardly imagine that he would have sanctioned the doctrine of the unimportance of treaties.

"It is only by European treaties," he wrote, "that European law is established." In 1870 he observed, as well as a matter of course, the treaty which his successors have recently disregarded. At Gladstone's instance a new treaty protecting Belgian neutrality was then signed, and the consent of the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, to the treaty of the English Prime Minister is noteworthy. "It did not apparently occur to him that a move which did not respect the treaty of 1870 offered lesser security for the preservation of the new agreement."

We have seen that the past of Ger-

many's policy is inconsistent with the claim of those who represent her as the champion of enlightenment against the "barbarism" of Russia. An examination of the facts reveals that the alleged antagonism between Slavonic and Teutonic civilization simply means that Germany conceives it to be her interest, first, forcibly to Germanize her Polish subjects, a policy in which she has hitherto failed and which would be rendered more difficult by a liberal policy in Russia; second, to give Austria her support in suppressing the national aspirations of Austria's discontented Slavonic subjects; third, to promote Austria's designs in the Balkan Peninsula, which are inconsistent with the independence of the free South Slavonic people, whom Russia supports; and, fourth, to oppose Russia's anti-German policy in her Baltic provinces and with effective control of the Baltic Sea.

Bismarck, writing to Gieseler in 1867, confessed that, outside Prussia, England was the only country with which he felt sympathy, and then remarked: "As soon as it was proved to me that it was in the interests of a sound and well-thought-out Prussian policy, I would with the same satisfaction see the troops fire on French, Russians, English or Austrians."

We need not entertain the smallest doubt that these words express the sentiment of the present rulers of Germany, though they are, as well as a matter of course, the treaty which his successors have recently disregarded. At Gladstone's instance a new treaty protecting Belgian neutrality was then signed, and the consent of the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, to the treaty of the English Prime Minister is noteworthy. "It did not apparently occur to him that a move which did not respect the treaty of 1870 offered lesser security for the preservation of the new agreement."

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were filled with sand and gravel, and the first of the heavy guns was concentrated on points in the rear spread out over the fields.

GERMANS THREATEN SWISS NEUTRALITY

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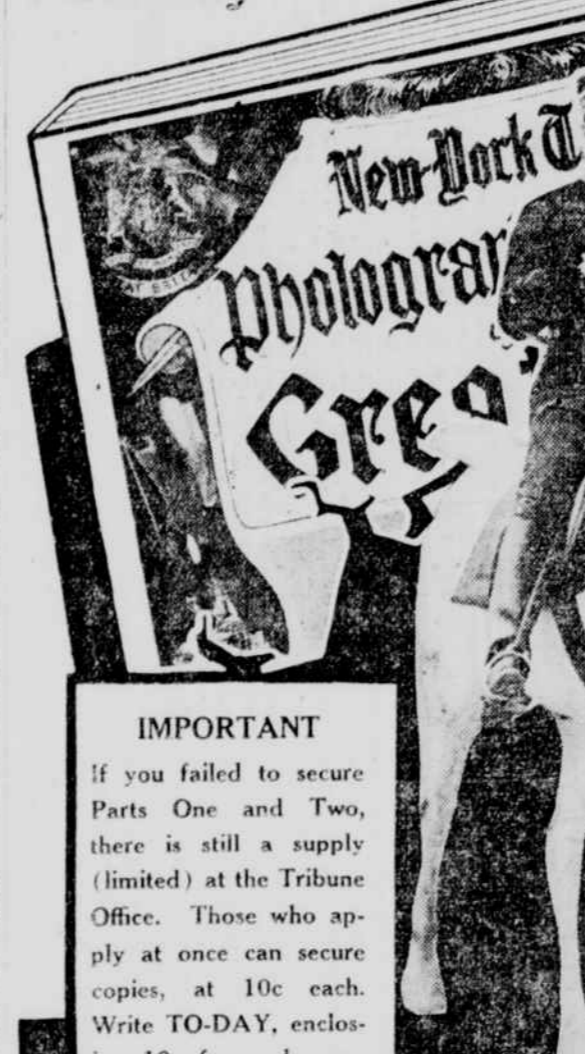
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